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# The GREGORIAN REVIEW

Studies in Sacred Chant and Liturgy

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English-language edition of the *Revue Gregorienne*

Bulletin of the School of Solesmes

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Bishop of Toledo

June 7, 1958

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Volume V, Number 3

May-June, 1958



## BY WAY OF EDITORIAL

Those who read these pages regularly know that we are far from indifferent to the current invasion of the choir-loft by the more advanced concepts of contemporary composition. We have written about it at other times and under other circumstances, but for the most part we have left untouched a question which needs to be answered in one way or another. This is the often-posed problem of the existence of this new music side by side with that of the old guard, the neo-Cecilian school, the fading idiom of the nineteenth century. This cultural symbiosis is nothing new in the history of musical evolution. We have the example of the polyphonist Johann Fux (1660-1741), writing in the crystallized techniques of the sixteenth century at a time when Bach was bringing the Baroque idioms to full flower, or the example of Hummel (1778-1837) and Clementi (1752-1832), composing sonata movements in the eighteenth century style of the comedy of manners long after Beethoven had irrevocably committed music to the more dramatic and broader palette of the nineteenth century, or, still further, the example of Richard Strauss (1864-1949), Jan Sibelius (1865-1957) or Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943), all of whom bore the traditional banner of the nineteenth century many decades after Schoenberg, Stravinski and Milhaud had set a course for other shores, such examples and others supply us with precedents by which to evaluate and understand our present-day situation in Catholic liturgical music.

As in other times, today there are factions and cliques gathered about both the avant-garde and the traditionalists of our living composers. As in other times, there are lively discussions and controversies about the value of the new ideas and the validity of the old. It is not for us to judge the music of our day with the limited perspective which we enjoy and with the issuing of broad generalities which do not relate to specific works in any real sense. We do wish,

however, to point out certain things which we think should be stated in print, and to ask that our readers give these questions serious thought.

Extreme viewpoints are dangerous in regard to contemporary composition, for the very nearness of the subject to our daily lives makes it difficult for us to see it clearly. Those who treat the older generation of composers and their more conservative works with condescending humor are being unfair both to the composers and to themselves. It is unbecoming for the son to deny his father, and if we, like the avant-garde of the eighteenth century, choose to ignore the practice by others of techniques we no longer use, we may cut ourselves off from some of the most illuminating of influences. The loss of so much of Bach's music as cultural nourishment for the generations which immediately followed him was due, perhaps, to the misunderstanding of his music exhibited by his younger colleagues, even his own sons. While we do not presume to label our more distinguished traditionalists as in the class of a Johann Sebastian Bach, we do wish to point out the nature of the error of those who reject the immediate past as offering no lessons of enduring value.

There is, of course, a great distinction between music that is the normal product of older traditions and the sentimental trash and sterile clichés of the army of half-trained amateurs who crowd the pages of most publishers' catalogs. There is not much difficulty in drawing the line. Anyone who has had some experience and the most elementary training in harmony and counterpoint can separate the sheep from the goats.

On the other hand, there is a tendency among conservative musicians to look upon the evolution of the newer styles and techniques with distrust. To those who prefer their music theory neatly packaged and sealed, the new ideas are disturbing, since they are not yet perceivable in the light of history. Since music theory is nothing more than the stating of generalization based on observation of music of



an earlier period, it follows that music theory cannot keep pace with composition. If, then, we wish to understand our present-day music, we must take it on its own terms, not on the terms of a theory which is unrelated to it.

Once a student asked me, in all sincerity, what Beethoven meant to convey by means of the wild finale to the A major Symphony. My answer, as I remember it, was that he meant to convey the effect of a wild finale. The answer was not intended to be witty, but merely to explain to the student that the music speaks for itself, and that it contains ideas which need no fanciful extrinsic labels to make sense to the ear.

So, too, with our new music. If it is well written, it, like the music of any other period, will achieve its own results in its own way. It will yield its structural secrets to intelligent and unprejudiced analysis, and its effect will be apparent, given a sufficient number of hearings, to the extent that the composer knows his business. What our new music definitely cannot and will not do is to supply anachronistic concessions to the closed mentality of one who refuses to listen to anything more dissonant than a minor seventh chord. Music may, like Stravinski's *Petrouchka*, quote traditional music within its own context, but this is never conceived as an excursion into the past.

Church music, we have heard it said, should not distract the listener from his prayers. This is true, but it bears commentary. The listener who is wholly unaware of the music is not necessarily concentrating on the liturgy. It is likely, moreover, that he will be drawn more from the attitude of prayer by sentimental trash than by contemporary music, once he becomes used to the latter. This is the crux of the matter. The composer cannot be required to make allowances for the poor taste or lack of understanding of the average church-goer. If it is somewhat difficult for an average listener to digest the new ideas which the composer expresses in his church music, this is because of a lack of elasticity on the part of the listener, not the composer. If the listener finds contemporary music annoying

because it does not enchant him with sweet chords and pretty tunes, so much the worse for him. We do not build our churches like places of amusement or decorate them with photographic murals designed to cater to the lazy aesthetic sense of our people. There can, therefore, be no justification for a similar approach to music.

There is a certain extreme leftist party among church musicians which would have us believe that none of the works which have departed from traditional harmony and counterpoint have value, and that they are the decadent products of an irrational mental attitude. These leftist musicians are nineteenth century, not only in techniques and materials, but in the romantically comfortable doctrine that nothing is worthwhile which does not draw admiration from John Q. Public. Ignoring the lessons of history, these anti-intellectuals have formed a special cult of low-brow art, a paradox which could only find expression in a rapidly evolving culture like ours. The anti-intellectuals of church music have told us that we must play to the people. Henceforth the common man, that much abused foil of all false reasoning, will be the arbiter of artistic values. The criterion will be, they tell us, the immediacy of the effect of a work of art. The common man does not object to his new-found position . . . we would not expect him to. On the contrary, we find that the anti-intellectuals, pulling the strings from behind the scenes, have caused the man-on-the-street to take pride in his task, and that we now have self-styled experts on the arts pontificating from their easy chairs in every home in the land. It is not rare to find Beethoven sharing his niche with Berlin, Goethe with Guest, and such works as Brahms' *Sunday Morning* with the Budweiser Saturday commercial. Soberly the low-brow artist applauds this artistic entropy, and he assures the general public that instinct is worth ten times more than intelligence in the evaluation of art.

We are quick to see the anti-intellectual at work in the persons of the leaders of the Cultural Committee of Soviet Russia. The Pygmalions of communist art are obvious to us, mainly because we have no special reason to feel sym-



pathy for their political ideals. It might be a shock to some Catholics to find the very same criterion of art, i.e., acceptance by the average citizen, being advocated on a basis identical to that of these communist counter-parts by responsible Catholic musicians. We cannot dismiss such a trend as insignificant. It is as symptomatic as the common use of the terms "longhair" and "egghead," the connotation of which is not what we would call complimentary, but is nevertheless that intended by those who include such words in their vocabulary.

There is one argument against the use of contemporary music which the anti-intellectual also exercises against the use of chant, polyphony of the sixteenth century and against other kinds of music less in sympathy with his artistic sensibilities: this is the generalization that such music is "too difficult for the parish choir." This is a phrase in anti-intellectualese which can be translated into meaningful English as follows: "This music is too difficult for me because I do not like it and because I am not certain of the techniques it may require; it is, therefore, too difficult for my choir." Needless to say, many parish choirs are proving the anti-intellectual to be wrong.

Contemporary music is not easy, for the most part, because it asks the performers, particularly singers, to move in areas which are less familiar and thus less secure to them. It is far from being *too* difficult, however, and those who will buckle down to serious rehearsing and study will find their efforts rewarded.

It is important that a choirmaster introduce his singers and congregation to the music of our times as soon as he feels the resources for its performance are adequate. Like any new experience, listening to new music must be carried out under the best of conditions. There should be enough experienced singers and enough allotted rehearsal time to achieve a finished performance. Any choir able to sing works of the traditional kind can learn to sing the newer idioms if the choirmaster himself understands them. Let us repeat, however, that these newer idioms should become

familiar to the singers as soon as possible, for it is unfortunately true that it is hard to teach an old dog new tricks. A choir with a thirty-year tradition of triadic harmony behind it, the most daring repertoire of which being taken from Refice and Terry, will find the change to Langlais or Peeters to be a little difficult to negotiate. Even this change, however, is not impossible, providing the choir-master will pick the steppingstones carefully.

Let us look forward to wider understanding of the music of our young composers. Let us, however, not be content to wait for someone else to do the spadework. Every musician, every church musician, owes it to his art to help it grow. In this way and in this way alone will music continue to admit the life-giving changes which have opened the door in past centuries to every worthwhile invention, evolution and creative effort.

# THE RHYTHMIC PRINCIPLES OF THE SCHOOL OF SOLESMES

Their Historical Foundations in Greco-Roman Art  
and in the Manuscripts

by Dom Andre Mocquereau, O.S.B.  
monk of Solesmes

[The following pages were printed in the *Revue Gregorienne* of 1925, and are reproduced here because of the current interest in the principles of the Solesmes theory and its relationship to historical truth. This article has several claims to our attention: first, it is by Dom Mocquereau, guiding spirit of the Solesmes movement; secondly, it is from the last few years of that scholar's life and represents his mature thought; thirdly, it is as much of a thumbnail sketch of the Solesmes theory as has ever been published, and is, therefore, in sharp contrast to the lengthy *Nombre Musical* and other writings; and lastly, it is one of the more important articles from a series of issues of the old *Revue* which, being out-of-print, may never appear again.]

A few minor changes have been made in the original text, since it was given by its author as a lecture, and certainly purely circumstantial remarks of its first form might have less meaning today.—Editor's Note.]

I would like to show you the extent to which the Solesmes rhythmic system has its roots in antiquity.

Although closely allied to present-day music, our rhythmic theory is no less closely related to the Greco-Roman musical art. Indeed, in spite of the differences of one age from another, there is only rhythmic principle, based on human nature, the main laws of which, being quite simple, govern all art and all ages. Their application, of course, varies in



an infinite way, but the principles which determine them remain immutable and are always easily recognizable.

Historically, Gregorian art forms the transition from Greek and Roman classical art and modern art. The fact that our principles of performance, completely in conformity with modern music, should be nothing less than the continuation and application of the ancient principles of olden times is assuredly a guarantee of security and confidence.

Now then, it is sufficient that we merely place Gregorian chant in the period of its birth to recognize that it is a very legitimate and logical result, as well as a recognizable one, of classical art.

A rapid enumeration of our great rhythmic principles of performance and their ancient classical sources may suffice to justify our assertion, and, consequently, the practice which we observe.

I have divided these principles into two categories:

1. Those which are concerned with *rhythm in general* and are applicable to all the rhythmic elements: words, music and dance.

2. Those which are concerned in particular with *Gregorian rhythm*.

In discussing these categories, we shall take them in order, dividing the remainder of our article into two parts.

I.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF  
ANCIENT RHYTHMIC CONCEPTS

**First Principle:** Rhythm is the establishing of order in movement.

This is the definition given by Plato (429-347 B.C.). This splendid, accurate and completely adequate definition embraces all the arts:

Arts of Movement:

Speech (including poetry)  
Music  
Dance

Arts of Repose:

Architecture  
Sculpture  
Painting

The definition summarizes everything that the ancients have said about rhythm.

This definition, then, is the basis of our whole point of view, and in the very first pages of the *Nombre Musical Gregorien* (I. p. 31), we have developed it in the following terms:

“A series of movements in sound—whether syllables or tones—is not enough to form a rhythm. It is necessary that these movements be put in order and harmoniously arranged. This order, this putting in order, rather, is the very form of the rhythm.

“The rhythm arranges in harmonious fashion the long and short sounds, and it intermixes the loud and soft, high and low sounds and timbres of all kinds. It grasps the nearly imperceptible undulations of the sonorous material, blends them, organizes them into larger and more varied forms (incises, members, phrases); it arranges them with intelligence

and taste in a perfect order. It shapes them, spiritualizes them, in a certain sense, and gives them beauty, life and movement. It is through rhythm that all the aspects of sound fall on the ear with proportion, suitability, accuracy and such necessary results, which, in turn, produce, together with pleasure, the assent of the mind and heart."

Then we set forth, on page 32, the different aspects of sound on which this organizing, unifying and animating power of rhythm is applied:

1. pure sound at the unison, such as the beat of a drum
2. pure melody
3. sung words, or merely spoken words
4. harmony

Moreover, our entire treatise in the *Nombre Musical Gregorien* is nothing but a long development of this first great principle: *Rhythm is the establishing of order in movement.*

**Second Principle:** All rhythmic movements can be reduced to one of two kinds: arsis, or impulse (*elevatio*), of the rhythm, and thesis, or repose (*positio, depositio*) of the rhythm.

All writers, Greek and Latin, agree on this point and seem completely to ignore the anacrusis, the danger and uselessness of which we shall examine further on.

Naturally these two movements of arsis and thesis are organized and repeated in a thousand ways to form incises, members and phrases.

Arsis, thesis—impulse, repose, these are marvelously clear terms, marvelously adapted to the various elements which serve as the basis for rhythm. It was not without having penetrated to the very root of the matter that the Greeks and Romans had given the title of *arts of movement* to poetry, music and dance, and the names of *arsis* and *thesis* to the two fundamental movements which summarized them.



By their very nature, in fact, these arts are subject to change. Their existence is in a succession of states of existence, and it flows, so to speak, from point to point in time.

Both the hand which makes a gesture and the body which, in the dance, forms a graceful turn, achieve a movement. Both move, being carried from one point to another by passing through all the intermediary stages. This is *local movement*, the movement of an object from one place to another.

The voice which articulates a sentence, pronounces a verse or sings a melody, also moves in its own way, and in a manner which is just as real as the more obvious kind. It moves from the first articulation until the final syllable, passing successively through all the intermediary syllables. In such a passage it imitates the movement of a man who walks or dances, or, better, that of a ball which bounces. It is thrown, falls, rebounds and passes thus from resting point to resting point until it arrives at the final resting point which terminates the sentence, rhythm and melody.

This movement, of course, is no longer *local*; it is *vocal*, but it is quite real. It fulfills all the conditions of a real movement, which is nothing else, in essence, than the passage from one state of being to another. The voice passes:

- from one note to another (melody);
- from a short note to a long one (quantity);
- from one dynamic level to another (intensity);
- from an accented syllable to an atonal one;
- from a group to another, etc.

A long time ago Aristoxenus (born about 354 B.C.), a pupil of Aristotle, said: "The voice moves when it sings, just as the body moves when it walks or dances."

Nevertheless, since local movement, because of the fact that it is material and is perceived by the vision, is more readily understandable and thus easier to describe, it is natural to take it as a parallel when we wish to describe vocal movement.

This, then is precisely what the Greeks did. The often simultaneous use of the three arts of movement . . . poetry, music and dance . . . led them to employ a single rhythmic terminology for them. They borrowed from the local movement of dancing two clear and vital expressions which they applied to the musical rhythmic movement, whether vocal or instrumental.

In the dance they called the ascending movement, the impulse of the body, the *arsis* (*elevatio*) and the fall or repose of the body at the conclusion of each movement the *thesis* (*positio, deposito*).

Consequently they applied the term *arsis*, elevation and impulse, to the sounds and syllables in their music which correspond with the *arsis* of the body, and the term *thesis*, meaning fall or repose, to the sounds and syllables sung at points corresponding to the dance movements of descent, whether these were for a mere "rebounding" and a new impulse, or for the completion of the movement in general with a final repose.

When poetry and music were performed without the accompaniment of dancing, these terms of *arsis* and *thesis* were in no way modified, but here, too, they correspond to the bodily movement of elevation and descent made by the *koryphaios*, who, with his foot or hand, indicated the rhythmic patterns.

We are, then, at the origin and creation of these two terms which have been subject to so much use. We should stop here, moreover, without getting into the contradictory means which were attributed to them later on. We must, above all, to maintain their original meaning, separate them in our minds from any idea of strength or weakness.

*Arsis* merely means "elevation"; *thesis* means "descent"; neither of them has any other implication or meaning.

It is obvious that the simplest means for indicating with a hand gesture the rise and fall, melodic as well as rhythmic, is a simple undulating line:



A slight curve at the beginning of the undulation shows the initial stroke of the hand, which begins the impulse, passing from inactivity to movement.

Well then, are we faithful, even here, to our ancient historical tradition? The reader will know this to be true; we have adopted these two expressions for all our works, and with them we describe, as did the ancients, all Gregorian rhythms.

But we must go a little further and explain the composition of the movements in the domain of sound which we have just mentioned.

Firstly, then, the smallest, the shortest.

**Third Principle:** At the roots of the ancient rhythmic system is found the indivisible "Simple Beat".

I shall borrow from Maurice Emmanuel a fundamental historical notion which he sets forth particularly well in his fine book, *Histoire de la langue musicale*, on pages 110 and 111:

"The principles on which the Greco-Roman rhythmic system was based are clearly different from those which form our own. We divide a large unit, the whole note, into parts; this whole note is considered as a kind of maximum value, the divisions of which into duple or triple fractions are seemingly endless. They are limited only by the practical considerations of the speed of articulation they require.



“The Greeks, on the contrary, began with a small unit, considered as the minimum and indivisible unit, applicable to the musical sound, to the syllable and to the quickest bodily movements, and they had greater freedom in organizing this unit in rhythmic groups than we dare to take in splitting up our whole note.

“This our modern rhythmic unit is essentially *divisible*, whereas that of the ancients was *indivisible* . . . this latter being called the *chronos protos* or “simple beat.”

Here, too, we move on a parallel with Athens and Rome.

This principle is basic; it is the veritable touchstone which discloses the value of any Gregorian theory. Any method which departs from it is condemned in advance, for it must of necessity lie outside the ancient historical tradition. We all can think of several of this kind.

If, then, you transcribe this simple beat as an eighth note, there is no possibility in Gregorian rhythm, any more than in Greco-Roman music, for sixteenths or thirty-seconds. Neither is there a place for a syllable shorter than the normal short-vowelled syllable in Greco-Latin metrics.

This simple beat is the basis of the whole rhythmic corpus, the norm and the rule of the other beat-forms in the entire rhythmic ensemble.

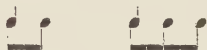
No doubt, of course, there is occasionally a slight compression or reduction of this simple beat in the flow of the oratorical or musical phrase, a very slight modification, but it may *not* be subdivided so as to produce mathematical fractional values of its original length.

It goes without saying that it may be broadened somewhat, even doubled or tripled, but then, of course, it becomes a *compound beat*.

This brings us to our next point.

**Fourth Principle:** The innumerable and capricious metrical, poetical and musical combinations of the Greeks and Latins were based, in the final analysis, on compound beats, or, in modern terms, on binary and ternary measures.

Two simple beats in combination produce a *binary* compound beat, and, obviously, three form a *ternary* compound beat.



Note that I have not said *rhythm*, for in our analysis we have not yet arrived at rhythm. For the moment we shall enumerate the underlying elements of it.

Here, too, we find ourselves in agreement with the ancient principles. The reader himself knows that our rhythmic notation takes into account these binary and ternary divisions which, moreover, are applicable to all languages, to all music, for 2 and 3 are, everywhere and always, the basis of any rhythm.

These two groupings are, to go further, mentioned in regard to Gregorian chant by several authors of the Middle Ages: Hucbald, Guido d'Arezzo and the anonymous author of the *Commemoratio Brevis*, for example.<sup>1</sup> I daresay that in our own time these divisions are absolutely inescapable. For those who wish to accompany the chant, they are absolutely necessary. Otherwise, where will the chords go? Very few people have the background for analyzing the Gregorian melodies from a rhythmic standpoint. We cannot go into this point further, however.

**Fifth Principle:** Relationship of these beats through action of the rhythm is linked to the ancient concept of rhythm, which was quantitative, that is, based only on the length of the syllables (short or long) and of the tones.

1. See some of these texts in the *Nombre Musical*, I, p. 9, 10, 19.

This is what we must explain, and this is what is so difficult to make our present-day musicians understand.

We are now in possession of the basic elements which enter into the composition of rhythm:

Simple beat:

Binary beat:                      or:

Ternary beat:                      or:

Up to this point these beats are unrelated to each other; they are like stones in a mason's barrow. They must be put in place in the rhythmic structure, linked together and arranged in order and harmony.

What, then will be the agent of this relationship, this order?

The *rhythm* will achieve this interrelationship, the action of this rhythm being essentially synthetic. Now our second principle, set forth above, has taught us that rhythmic movements may be reduced to one of two kinds: arsis or impulse, and thesis or reposeful.

Which of these two will be first?

Since these terms are borrowed from the art of the dance, it is obvious that the rhythm begins quite naturally by the arsis, the impulse. The foot of the dancer leaves the floor, starting from an inactive state, and in raising his foot he begins the movement which will be completed by the lowering of his foot at the thesis, the second phase of the simplest kind of rhythmic movement. This is a *rhythmic step*. It is pointless to go into the close relationship between the lifting and the lowering of the foot. These are two phases of the same *local* movement.

*Vocal* movement is subject to the same necessities, with those differences which we shall discuss a little later.



What are the relationships between the arsis and thesis regarding the length, the quantity of the sounds and of the syllables?

The comparison with the step of the dancer tells us more in this respect.

Naturally, after the effort of lifting the foot, it tends to fall back at once to the floor. On the other hand, once it has returned to the floor, it remains there in a state of repose, requiring no further movement.

In other words, we have brevity at the lifting phase and a tendency toward length at the point of repose.<sup>1</sup>



You will recognize the iambic rhythm here, the natural and primordial rhythm. "The iambic form," says Aristotle, "is the ordinary discourse, one expresses oneself most naturally in iambic form."

We need no clearer text than this one of the same author:

"The long form is better for concluding a phrase,<sup>1</sup> at the point where a short syllable, because of its weakness, leaves the phrase mutilated and awkward. It is therefore on a long element that the phrase should close, in order that the end of it should be apparent, not only by virtue of the intention of the author, nor because of the graphic material indication (the period), but by means of the rhythm which is its closing element."<sup>2</sup>

1. See the *Nombre Musical*, p. 44-45.

2. Aristotle, *Rhetorics*, III, 8; also *Nombre Musical*, volume I, p. 47.

These Greeks have left nothing to our guesswork regarding the general principles of rhythm!

Note this expression carefully: "by means of the rhythm"; the phrase, which is rhythm itself, should conclude on a long element. Indeed, I do not hesitate to say that *every* rhythm—and I speak of natural rhythm, of course—should conclude on a long element: the rhythm-phrase, rhythm-member, rhythm-incise and rhythm-word. This holds true for all languages, all music and all dance!

Is not what we call in Latin the *caesura*, obligatory in verse, the application of this very law, the proof of its necessity? Indeed, the *caesura* is nothing other than a "long syllable which completes a word (incise, or member of a verse) and forms the beginning of a foot."

Tityre, tu patu-*lae* recu-*bans* sub tegmine fagi

Sylve-*strem* tenu-*i* mu-*sam* medi-*taris* a-*vena*

This rhythmic fall on the thesis is called the *ictus*, meaning "stroke" (in modern terms, the first beat of a simple measure).

This brings us to our sixth principle.

**Sixth Principle:** The arsis and thesis are indifferent as regards intensity; this intensity is sometimes associated with the element of impulse, sometimes with that of repose.

The ancient metricians and musicians never spoke of *intensity*, even in the fourth or fifth century. St. Augustine, for example, makes no mention of it.

Open, on the other hand, your modern treatises, and you will read: "The long element, the thesis, the fall of the rhy-

thm corresponds to the intensive part, and the rise of it to the weak part.”

How could such an error, so remote from the ancient concept, come about?

I have explained this elsewhere (*Paleographie Musicale*, vol. VII, 194-195).

The error arises from the terminology used to express the beating of the rhythm with the hand or foot.

The ancients, indeed, were not content merely with having at their disposal a clear and precise terminology to express the rhythmic movement. They also had, in order to transmit it and to depict it visually, not only the movements of the body in orchestrics, but also the gesture. Just as we do, they used the hand or foot, and quite naturally these gestures reproduced the rhythmic movements of the dance. The lifting of the hand or foot corresponded to the arsis, and the lowering of it to the thesis.

An important observation must, however, be made at this point:

The expressions used, particularly by the Latins, in order to express the action of beating the measure or rhythm, such as *percutere*, *cadere*, *ferire*, *plaudere* or further, *ictus*, *notae*, *percussions*, etc.<sup>1</sup> or in particular this text: *Est arsis sublatio pedis sine sono; thesis positio pedis cum sono*, all these gave rise to a completely erroneous interpretation.

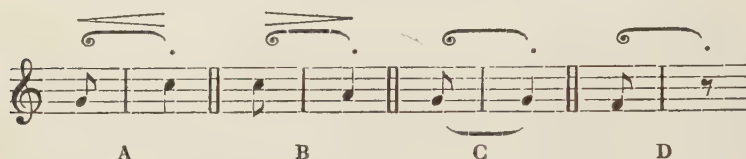
Because the foot in falling, the fingers in clapping or the hand in beating the thesis all produced a noise, a sound, the false conclusion was drawn that all theses were loud and all the arsis movements weak.

This conclusion is clearly false, for the noise made by the foot of the leader does not indicate that the correspond-



ing note or syllable is necessarily loud. This noise merely indicates a thesis, a fall, strong or weak; from the noise made by the foot we have erroneously attributed loudness to the melody and rhythm at that point.

The *cum sono* has no meaning except for the gesture itself, or except for the foot which is lowered to indicate the place of the thesis, but not its dynamic *quality*. This thesis can be loud (A), or weak (B), or merely a syncopated prolongation (C), or even a moment of silence (D):



The tap of the foot will be heard, however, in each case with the same degree of intensity.

Moreover, a very simple consideration will show the falseness of the modern interpretation. If we wish to apply the expression "*cum sono*" to the melody and rhythm, we must also apply the expression "*sine sono*." But then there would be no sound, no note, no syllable to fill the moment of arsis in the melody and rhythm! We see, then, that these two expressions cannot be taken in a sense other than that of the alternation of a noise and a moment of silence produced by the foot or by the hand of the choir director.

For a long period sixteenth century polyphony was directed with a beat of this ancient kind, "*cum sono*," and this deplorable practice has not even now been completely relinquished. Should we conclude, then, that all the *loca percussionis* of the polyphonic *battute* are strong beats? Think of what would result from the application of such a theory!

Nothing prevents Gregorian music from receiving the same treatment. Why should we not admit this? We allow

ourselves, in our lectures and rehearsals, at the monastery and elsewhere, to indicate the points of the rhythmic flow, just as did the Greeks and Romans, by tapping "*cum sono*" with the foot or hand on the notes or syllables which carry the thesis, the rhythmic fall. The singers clearly realize that this process has as a purpose the unification of voices which might stray or lose ensemble, and not really to mark a strong beat.

Theodore Reinach states accurately, in the *Dictionnaire des Antiquites*, under the heading *Musique*, that "the accent of stress, the modern strong beat, did not exist in Greek musical culture."

We must bear this fact in mind.

Rhythm is essentially a question of *movement*.

What, then, is the first beat of the measure?

The thing that characterizes the first beat of the measure is that it is truly *thetic*. It is the point of arrival, strong or weak, of the rhythm, and *this is all it is*. Before becoming the first beat of a measure it is the last beat of a rhythm, either elementary or compound. Consequently, let us call this beat the *thetic beat*, the *heavy beat*, according to the expression of Riemann and Vincent d'Indy, the *beat of repose*, of *arrival*, of *fall*, of the *ictus*, etc., in opposition to the *arsic beat*, the beat of *impulse*, of *beginning*, of *effort*, etc., all these qualifications are accurate, since they relate to the rhythm, but let us not call this first beat of the measure a *strong beat*, an expression which indicates a grouping of material and artificial nature, based entirely on intensity.

A measure in itself has no special quality; it is nothing in the rhythm. It is the rhythm alone which creates it and gives it its character; it is rhythm alone which gives life to the melody. Moreover, the habit of some musicians to give all their attention to the measure without granting the neces-

sary consideration to the rhythm is the cause of multiple errors with which our solfege courses are burdened. This explains the cause of those heavy, material and lifeless performances which too often disfigure the finest pieces of the classical repertoire.

The true musician, on the other hand, gives his attention completely to the rhythm. What he concerns himself with first of all is that succession of impulse and repose, effort and relaxation, risings and fallings, arsis and thesis, and in a word, this well-ordered succession of cadences and movements which constitute the very essence of rhythm. The first beats of the measures are not, for a real musician, anything more than points of reference which mark each step of the rhythm. For him, the regular fall of these first beats is a *rhythmic* fact rather than a *metric* one. These beats are nothing more than the conclusions of the rhythmic groups. Let us realize fully, then, that the grouping of the elements of language or music, syllables and sounds, is achieved neither through intensity or measure, but by the rhythm alone, by that succession of impulses and relaxations which we have discussed.

We shall come back to this principle soon when we shall have the occasion to apply it in a Gregorian melody.

But, then, what is the role and the place of intensity in the words, music and rhythm?

Intensity creates neither the rhythm nor the measure.

It is above measure and belongs to the whole of rhythm, to the *greater rhythm*, which has no need of intensity, however, to organize its flow. Intensity does not repeat itself periodically; it does not rest necessarily in each rhythmic ictus; it surpasses the measure and the little elementary rhythms. Intensity belongs to the phrase, to the greater rhythm which it completely encompasses. It proceeds, by means of progressive crescendos and decrescendos, from note to note, from group to group, from word to word, linking

them and blending them into a single organization. This force is the substance and life-blood of the rhythm; it follows the melodic vein, rises and falls with it, spreading life, warmth and beauty.

Let us summarize and clarify this.

Dynamic modifications have a triple purpose:

a) They augment the unity of the rhythm; they unite in a single dynamic movement, increasing or decreasing, the sounds, notes, syllables, words and phrases. They bring a new synthetic element, *intensity*, to the quantitative synthesis which has already produced the rhythm; they color this pre-existent rhythm.

b) They contribute, like the short and long elements, to the bringing out of the impulse and repose of the rhythm, and they make its movement and life more evident.

c) In these very ways, they form one of the most beautiful ornaments of the rhythm.<sup>1</sup>

I have said that they "color" the rhythm. Indeed, what the artist's colors are to the lines of a design in a picture, the dynamic nuances are to the rhythm itself. They blend with it and bring it out more effectively, forming a single unit with it.

### **Seventh Principle: The ancient musicians used no anacrusis.**

The analysis of rhythm measure by measure, from strong beat to strong beat, has led modern musicians and metricians to consider the "strong beat" as the principal beat of the rhythm, and what is more, as a beginning.

In this sense, if there should be a note, a syllable, a group before the measure bar, before the down-beat, these

1. *Nombre Musical*, volume I, 59-62.



all should be viewed, according to these modern theorists, as notes of prelude, accessory notes, notes outside the rhythm: "before the down-beat"—*anacrusis*.

If the reader has followed me thus far, he will understand immediately the pointlessness of this theory, which misconstrues completely the nature of rhythm, for these notes, called "accessories" (!), are merely arsic elements of the true beginning of the line, leading to the thesis of the first down-beat.

This term *anacrusis*, moreover, is very recent. It comes to us from Germany, and we owe it to Mr. G. Hermann, who used it first in his *Elementa doctrinae metricae* (Leipzig, 1816). The list of opponents to this system grows larger every day, and there is no need to carry this matter further.

Perhaps someone will say to us: In fact, in music and poetry does not the phrase often begin with the down-beat?

Yes, of course. This rhythmic fact is found often in Gregorian chant. I propose the following rule as an answer with no exceptions:

*Every melody, every rhythm begins with an arsis, either expressed or understood.*

**Eighth Principle:** The ancient rhythmic system was not measured, but free.

The study of ancient metrics, both Greek and Latin, gives us the proof of the existence of that *rhythmic freedom*,<sup>1</sup> which is also that of Gregorian chant, the heir, again on this point, of all antiquity.<sup>2</sup>

1. *Nombre Musical*, volume II, Introduction.

2. "Des mesures de toute longueur se succèdent et s'enchainent dans un incessant renouvellement de la durée". Maurice Emmanuel, *La musique de la Grèce* in the *Encyclopedie de Lavignac*.

This freedom is conveyed largely by the mixture of binary and ternary beats and by the unequal length of the incisives.

Regularity, the squareness of the system using the "strong beat" is contrary to the freedom of Gregorian rhythm and should be definitely disregarded.

**Ninth Principle: The music is predominant over the text.**

The predominance of the music over the text is clearly asserted by the ancient authors. St. Augustine in particular is formal. I merely wish to mention this in passing.

It is enough merely to open a chant book to rediscover this law applied in countless places in its fullest sense. This explains the inversions of the tonic accent, the weak penultimate syllables loaded with notes, etc.

We must be very careful not to change the least thing about these arrangements, which reveal the thought of antiquity and its spirit. The ancients recognized musical rhythm as being superior to verbal rhythm, and, where the need arose, they did not hesitate to follow the musical form, however the rhythm of the text might be overruled.

These are facts, and there is no point in belaboring them.

## II.

RHYTHMIC PRINCIPLES PROPER TO  
GREGORIAN CHANT

**First Principle:** The syllables are approximately equal, and this is related directly to the simple beat of Gregorian rhythm.

We shall need another reference to history.

I shall not pretend to teach you that two languages arose from the *prisca latinitas* of the first centuries of Roman culture, two proses, or rather, two special forms of the same language:

One, widely used among the upper classes of society, was the *sermo urbanus, eruditus, perpolitus* (polite, learned, refined);

The other, used among the common people, was the *sermo pleblius, inconditus* (gross, without art), and simply put, the vulgar tongue.

These two languages were proses;

But the *common tongue* observed in its syllables only the natural, measured quantity, weighed according to the natural weight of each syllable; there was, therefore, a certain inequality in the length of the syllables;

The *refined language* controlled these slight nuances of length, broadening the heavier, more open syllables, up to the point of making these into a metrical long value of two beats, and it reduced the lighter syllables to the metrical short value of a single beat. This produced an artificial and wholly conventional kind of quantity.

These two related languages existed side by side for many centuries.

As early as the time of St. Augustine, however, these two became less distinct. Little by little the differences began to disappear. The written literature felt the effects of this slow evolution, and almost imperceptibly the artificial quantity disappeared, giving place to the *quasi-equality* of the syllables and to the melodic and strong accent.

Toward the sixth century, all the differences had vanished, the two forms having been blended into a single language, ecclesiastical Latin, on which all the Gregorian melodies are based.<sup>1</sup>

These diverse evolutions of the Latin language are, for the Gregorian rhythmician, a series of lessons which he should hold in high value. It is because of a desire to conform to the Latin pronunciation of the ecclesiastical Gregorian era that we consider the syllables as being *simple beats*, which we have found to be the basis of the ancient rhythmic system.

The primitive neumatic notation, moreover, corresponds with this concept, for it is now possible to prove, with evidence, that the pure Gregorian neumes, the *punctum* and *virga*, alone or in groups, do not have *per se* any variable quantitative value; they stand for *one simple beat* each. From this we determine that the numerous rhythmic signs added to the primitive neumes in many manuscripts are intended to complete a notation which is as imperfect as regards the *melody* as regards the *rhythm*.

It may be asked where, in this equality of syllables, is the factor of *length* which, according to our theory, is necessary for the establishing of rhythm.

I shall answer this question in a moment, when we shall be discussing the rhythm of the words, but before this, we must explain the second principle, which has a very great importance.

I refer to the *accent*, and to *accentuation*.

1. See the *Nombre Musical*, volume II, Chapter I, art. 1.



**Second Principle:** The Latin tonic accent has qualities of raised pitch, shortness and slight intensity.

I shall summarize in a few words the history of the Latin accent, and I ask of you a very special attention, for on this point Gregorian scholars are most divided.

What we call now the *tonic accent* was, in the Indo-European languages, such a Sanskrit, merely a *tone*, a *melodic elevation*.

This concept of pitch remained the essential character of the true Latin accent. It has never varied, and we can find its traces even in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries:

a) In the *classical* era, the accent was high-pitched and short, nothing more.

b) In the *postclassic* or Gregorian era, the accent, still high and short, had become, in addition, slightly intensive.

c) In the *Romanesque* era, the quality of shortness had disappeared, and the accent, although still high-pitched, had become *intensive* and *long*.

The Romanesque accent, however, has nothing to do with Gregorian chant. The only thing which we should understand is the nature or qualities of the accent during the Gregorian era, that is, well before the Romanesque era. Now, then, these qualities were those of *elevated pitch*, *shortness* and a *discreet intensity*.

I say *slight intensity*, and I call your attention to this fact, for this remark has its practical application in the performance of the Gregorian melodies, and, we should emphasize, this qualification of slightrness is based on the very history of the Latin accent.

Indeed, it is certain that the intensity of the tonic syllable was not introduced until quite late and by slow degrees

in the development of the Latin language. The closer we get to the classical era, the less apparent and slight does this intensity seem to be, whereas the more we approach the period of the romance languages, the more this same intensity seems to gain in amplitude and vigor.

Now we should not forget that the origin of the Latin liturgical melodies is not far removed from the classical era; by the fourth and fifth centuries many musical pieces of the repertoire had already been composed.<sup>1</sup>

If *raised pitch*, this primitive and uniquely enduring quality of the accent, is here so carefully asserted, we may, without fear of error, presume that *intensity* entered into it in only a small way; it existed, of course, but not too markedly, and with a fine and delicate character.

Moreover, would it not be out-of-place and a manifest anachronism to propose for the performance of our liturgical melodies an accent whose weight and intensity have brought about the decomposition of the Latin language? If we wish to remain in agreement with philological, historical and aesthetic laws, we must seek the use of a moderately intensive accent, a truly Latin and not romance accent, the delicacy and elegance of which will recall the first four or five centuries of our era, an accent which will bring no taint to the language, but, on the contrary, will preserve it in perfect integrity.<sup>1</sup>

**Third Principle:** In the rhythm of isolated words, the tonic accent falls naturally on the arsis of the rhythmic movement, the thesis or repose on the final syllable, which, because of that fact, is slightly lengthened.

We have only to apply to the words the principles of general rhythm set forth above.

1. Many of these, the Prefaces for example, are completely marked with the characteristics of the old metrical system. Their musical cadences are based on the Ciceronian cursus: a single note corresponding to a single short syllable, while for each long syllable, two notes are provided.

1. *Nombre Musical*, volume II, p. 230-232.

To form a word it is not enough merely to juxtapose a few syllables.

“What constitutes a word and gives it its form and its existence as a word, . . . is its unity.”

How is this accomplished?

“By the emission,” says Dom Pothier, in his *Melodies gregoriennes*, “of the whole word, as of a single movement. This phenomenon which thus charges the series of syllables which make up each word with a single movement constitutes the very essence of accentuation.

“Each word is produced by a single impulse, which begins with the first syllables of the word, attains the culminating point of its strength (and of its melody) on the principal syllable, called because of this reason the “accented” syllable, and then expires . . . on the end of the word. Up to the point at which the accented syllable is pronounced, the voice seems to rise; it then falls back on the last syllable of the word and remains there a moment before taking a new flight.’”<sup>2</sup>

Thus did Dom Pothier put it.

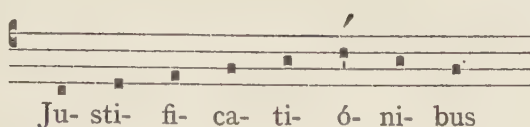
I would like to add a few reflections. Please note that the intrinsic analysis of this *movement*, of this *impulse*, embraces all the elements of the word, all its qualities: high and low syllables, loud and soft syllables and short and long syllables,<sup>3</sup> thus making a melodic, intensive and quantitative unit and leading to, lastly, that rhythmic unity to which we owe, in the final analysis, the verbal unity, the unity of the word, and that of the idea itself.

Let us take as an example a long word in which the more extended movement will permit us to better sense and

2. *Melodies gregoriennes d'après la tradition*, chapter VIII.

3. In the agogic sense.

understand, in particular, the melodic movement:



a) All the antetonic syllables move toward the accent in a rising gradation;

b) The tonic syllable (the tone) crowns the summit of this melodic rise (arsis);

c) The postonic syllables then descend and come to rest on a syllable lower than that of the accent (thesis).

A double synthetic result is obtained:

a) The notes are linked together, and a *melody* is formed;

b) The syllables are united and given order, and a *word* is created.

Life circulates in this tiny body. It is the perfect expression of an idea.

The *melody alone* has achieved this unity, for we have not yet spoken of the intensive movement, of the intensive accentuation.

Yet, what was sufficient in the classical era would no longer do for the Gregorian period, in which the melody, intensity and rhythm are inseparable.

The accent is not merely the *melodic* summit of the Latin word, but it is also its *dynamic* summit.

We must approach this summit carefully in singing this melody, using slight pressure, a moderate crescendo, well



controlled, increasing with the movement of the melody. The accent itself will be given without harshness or brilliance. Let us not forget that *the raised pitched is always the most spiritual of qualities of the accent, and that material intensity does not enter into it except secondarily.*

Let us now consider the element of *length*, which I have promised to discuss, for it is necessary in the formation of rhythm.

We know that in principle each syllable, taken separately, equals only one *simple beat*. Classical quantity no longer has influence on the Latin language in the Gregorian period.

Nevertheless, the grouping of syllables as words makes it impossible not to slightly alter this fundamental equality. Isolated, the syllables remain cold and without positive value, but when grouped, they become animated by contact with the melody and the dynamics, and they follow all these fluctuations.

In this sense there are a few slight modifications of the strict note-lengths, including accelerations, retards and the like, which, well-performed, make the life of the word more evident. The attracting power of the accented vowel and the preparation of the final repose are the main influences in forming these nuances which modify the mathematical and material proportions of the syllables.

The melodic rise and the dynamic crescendo draw the syllables which precede the accent toward the accent; they flow, they seem to fly toward this magnet which draws them on.

However powerful this attraction may be, however, it is never strong enough in this plainchant to modify the temporal value of the notes (making them into measurable fractions or multiples). It is merely a matter of a delicate shading which must neither be exaggerated nor neglected. It gives the words a quality of animation and life.

The *tonic syllable* itself may undergo slight modifications of length and shadings of amplification which must be taken into account unless we wish to risk losing the whole focus of this art and its beauty.

Even when singing joyfully down over the scale of notes and syllables, we must begin to think of the melodic cadence, particularly the final repose, which will be graceful and pleasing only if it is prepared by a slight retard which affects the accent itself. The accent, therefore, will be slightly broadened, like the keystone of a miniature rhythmic arch.

Now we are ready to consider the rendering of the *final syllable of the word*, which, in certain aspects, is the most important; this final step, the establishing of its length, and we shall have determined the complete rhythm.

We shall remember that the length of a sound (note or syllable) is, in the natural movement of the rhythm, the sign of the end of the rhythm, the sign of the thesis. After the analysis which we have just made of the Latin word, it is obvious that the final syllable is that which concludes the rhythm, and also that which should be long.

There is, in this analysis of the Latin word, such a perfect agreement among all the elements that the truth of the process seems to stand out before one's eyes.

Everything which, in the Latin word, is part of the *impulse* (*elevatio, sublatio, inchoatio, arsis*), that is, the melodic impulse as represented by the rising line of sounds, the dynamic impulse as represented by the crescendo, the quantitative impulse as produced by the linking, acceleration and rapidity of the rising notes, and the rhythmic impulse, the summation of all the rest, . . . all these factors are concentrated most naturally on the first syllables of the word in order to raise them, link them together and prepare them thus for the cadence.

On the contrary, everything which is related to the *repose*, everything which leads to it (*positio, remissio, finis*,

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*thesis*), including the descent of the melody, the decrescendo of the dynamics, the slowing of the tempo, and, lastly, the conclusion and thesis of the rhythm, . . . these elements blend with the last syllable or syllables to form the final repose on which every rhythm must fall, from the smallest to the largest:



As we can see, the influence of the Latin accent greatly surpasses the syllable which bears it. It is extended to all the syllables of the word. We must, then, distinguish between the *accent*, which belongs to the single accented syllable, and the *accentuation*, which includes the whole word.

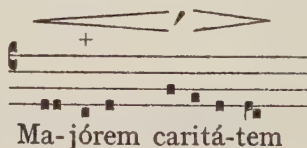
This, then, is the justification of the ancient adage: *Accentus, anima vocis*.

Such is the normal form of the isolated word, taken in itself, that is, in abstraction from its position in any given melody.

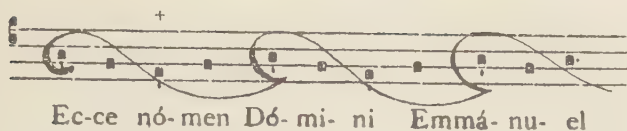
It is clear, however, that by forming part of a larger unit, it may lose or modify some of its personality.

Thus, considering just the accent, we may observe, in the middle of a melody, that it loses:

a) its pitch elevation:



b) its arsic character:



c) and even some of its intensity, to a certain extent, as in the example of *Majorem*.

I cannot go into all the details of such a modification, as they are studied at length in the second volume of the *Nombre Musical*, in Chapter VI.

I have gone into this arsic nature of the Latin accent only in order to profit from the opportunity to warn the reader against the modern theory of the close, natural and obligatory union of the intensive Latin accent with the strong beat. This theory, applied to the Gregorian melody, which is so light and smooth by nature, puts shackles on its feet and becomes its downfall.

Of course, I admit, the Greeks also had their "strong-beat" music, but, like Maurice Emmanuel, we should make a distinction between, on one hand, the forms of popular dance and the military march, and on the other, the lyric and theatrical forms.

The former was probably marked by strong and regularly equidistant percussions. The Greeks "have given free rein to this rhythmic limitation in those cases where it has every right to rule, that is, in the whole of popular rhythemics; but they were free of its influence elsewhere . . . The theory of the strong beat seemed good enough to them for the followers of Komos,<sup>1</sup> those who, after having drunk awhile, celebrated the divine Bacchus and sought, sometimes in vain, to beat on the ground, for these celebrations, in a regular and strict measure."<sup>2</sup>

1. Komos, the god who presided over the pleasures of the table.

2. Maurice Emmanuel, *Histoire de la langue musicale*, I, p. 110.



One further word about an important point.

Even in that Greek dance music where the first beat was regularly treated as strong, in the modern manner, it was still the element of *length* which determined the rhythm and the place of the thesis. In this special case, however, length and the loud beat fell together by the deliberate design of the musicians, who wished to obtain a violent effect, proper to popular dance or to the military march.

To come, then, to Latin literature and music, the element of loudness on the down-beat was not introduced until the advent of tonic poetry. It was merely an accident in the history of rhythm, and I shall not fear to state that, in my opinion, it was an error, just as in our own day.

Gregorian musicians, even in the Middle Ages, did not err in this regard. The musical instinct directed and illuminated their path. When faced by the problem of these tonic poems, distractingly tonic, we might say, they did not hesitate *to correct them*. When they composed their melodies to them, they often placed the tonic accent on the up-beat, the arsis; see, for example, the *Ave maris stella* and so many other proses.

### Conclusions

I must be content with having set forth these three principles, proper to Gregorian chant:

- 1) The equality of the syllables,
  - 2) The elevated pitch, shortness and slight intensity of the Latin accent,
  - 3) The impulse of the accent, the broad repose of the final syllable in isolated words;
- for these three principles are the basis of the rhythm of the Gregorian melodies.

If I were able to continue this exposition of principles, I would have had to plan to speak of:

1) The frequent predominance of the music over the text,

1) The frequent predominance of the music over the text,

2) The extension of the sung syllables over long melismas, even the short penultimate syllables,

3) The system of Gregorian chironomy, etc.,  
since all these are principles based on history and on the musical facts of antiquity, but all that would be outside the scope of a brief article. We must draw a line here.

My purpose has been simply to prove, while answering an erroneous assertion, the close relationship between classical Greco-Roman rhythm and the rhythm of the liturgical chants of the Roman Church, and in this way to justify the theories of Solesmes which are based on the ancient form of this art.

This general proof has to be provided first of all, for in the development of the arts, there are no gaps, no sharp breaks, no sudden innovations. All stages of progress, like, unfortunately, those of decadence, can be studied, followed and explained. Any theory which cannot give this decisive proof, which cannot, so to speak, show its birth certificate and its legitimate genealogy, is condemned to fall. This explains the failures of so many writers of our day who, instead of going back to sources, are contented with the fruits of their imagination and their modern studies to construct their various systems.

No doubt we have given, in this article, only a bird's-eye view of these great principles, but this all-over examination will suffice, it seems to me, for justification of our theory in its general lines, for it is attached by close ties to the whole artistic past of olden times. This is all that I have sought to establish here.

# ERRORS OF LATIN ACCENTUATION IN THE LITURGICAL BOOKS\*

by M. H. Gavel

The accentuation of many words, as they stand in the official liturgical books, is manifestly wrong and should be corrected. When, beginning with the late sixteenth century, the praiseworthy custom of writing in the accent indications in the chant books for the words of three syllables or more became more and more widely observed, those who devised this system of marks were content merely to apply the general rules of Latin accentuation in a strict sense, without taking into account the exceptions mentioned by ancient authors or those which the examination of pieces of the chant itself or the practice of the more traditionalist churches could have revealed to them. The correction of these errors seems to be called for without question whenever they are obvious. Not only is a word accented in a false way a barbarism, but it often also disfigures the melodic design. The aim of this present writing is to propose a basis for these corrections.

## Summary of the General Rules Relating to the Latin Accent

We shall recall, therefore, the general rules of Latin accentuation, but first we shall set forth a few ideas on the evolution of the pronunciation of Latin from the classical age

\* Some of the indications contained in this article may suggest the thought to some of our readers that the rules usually followed for the adaptation of the chant to the text, particularly in psalmody, could be re-examined on some points. It may seem from this study that certain details should be modified, or, on the contrary, that the study may provide their complete and full justification. The aim of this article, however, is not to start a dispute over existing customs. The author merely wishes to present a table, as exact as it can be made, of Latin accentuation as it was observed by the authors of the ancient Gregorian tradition, and in this way to lead to the correction of certain flagrant errors which often produce shocking oppositions between the accentuation which the chant presupposes and that which is marked in the printed text. The modern marks are often the result of too severe an application of rules which are too general in scope, an unfortunate approach used since the sixteenth century.

until that in which the ecclesiastical chant appears to have been fully formed, that is, about the time of St. Gregory the Great (end of the sixth century).

As early as the archaic period in Latin there were short and long vowels, the latter being about twice as long as the former. The same situation held good for the classical age, too, but at that point a difference of timbre seems to have been added to that of length. Making an exception for the A, for which, if such a two-fold manner existed, it has left no trace, the long vowels were "closed", whereas the short ones were "open". From the beginning of the third century the difference in length, however, began to disappear, and only the difference of timbre remained, so that the ancient long vowels were no longer anything but merely closed sounds, whereas the ancient short ones were merely open sounds. This state of affairs was attained, it would seem, toward the end of the fourth century. As we may suppose, however, since the difference between the long and short vowels, and consequently between long and short syllables, was no longer observed by the common mass of people speaking Latin, many educated persons, particularly among the professional orators and professors, must have continued for a certain length of time to observe the older distinctions. But St. Augustine declares that in wishing to compose a "psalm" for the use of the people, he did not write it according to the old laws of prosody, which the people no longer understood. In any case, save perhaps at the beginning, and this is not very certain, the relative length or brevity of the syllables was not taken into account in the formation of the Gregorian repertoire (if we suppose that it was still maintained at all), but merely the accent of the word. The apparent exceptions in hymnody are less real than they seem to be.

For as long as the difference in length between short vowels and long ones was perceptible, it called for a similar distinction between the syllables. Any syllable ending with a short vowel was also short: for example, the two first syllables of the word *Domini*, or the second syllable of the word *pullitra* (the consonant group *tr* belongs completely to the following syllable).



Long elements were: (1) every syllable in which the vowel was long, (2) every syllable in which the vowel was short but was followed by two consonants, the first of which, at least, was syllabified with it. This is the case, for example, with the initial syllables of the words *corpus*, *tempus*, *fortis*, *multum* or *illa*. Syllables of this latter category were called "long by position". Let us note that the vowel itself was not in this sense lengthened, as has often been claimed erroneously. The study of the treatment of Latin vowels in the romance languages and the testimony itself of certain ancient grammarians proves this fully. It follows, then, that the long syllables were not all of equal value. It is clear that the syllable *vil* of the word *villa*, and the syllable *ul* of the word *ulla*, in which the vowel is long of its own qualities, were longer than the syllable *il* of *illa* or *mul* of *multa* in which the vowel has a short quality. Nevertheless, the Latin ear (as, also, the Greek ear) drew only two categories from the syllables: shorts and longs. All languages are subject to such customary simplifications: thus, for example, although in the pronunciation of the Spanish or Languedocian R we can perceive at least four or five variants (soft occlusive R, soft relaxed R, strong R of two trills, strong R of three trills, etc.), the Spanish or Languedocian ear ranks them all in one of two categories: the R of a single stroke, and those of two or more.

In regard to the final syllables containing short vowels, followed by a single consonant, such as *nus* of *dominus*, *bor* of *arbor*, *it* of *fuit*, etc., they were considered short when the following word began with a vowel, since then the final consonant of the word became syllabified with the initial vowel of the second. In such a combination, then, as *unus erat*, the final S of *unus* was syllabified with the E of *erat*. If, on the other hand, the second word began with a consonant, the final syllable of the first word was considered long by position, for example, in the combination *unus dixit*.

The X, of course, was actually a double consonant, equivalent to CS, and always caused the preceding vowel to be long by position.

We shall merely mention in passing a primitive type of accentuation in which prefixes were more accented than the radicals, as in the modern case of German verbs with separable prepositional particles. This had as its effect the modification of the vocalism of many Latin words, but it eventually disappeared, and from before the classical era a tonic accent was developed in the language which at the beginning was completely, or nearly so, an accent of pitch, that is, it consisted of an inflection of the voice emitting a vowel or a portion of a vowel on a higher tone.

When the accented vowel was long, the accent could be, according to the case, "circumflex" (in which case it was the first part of the vowel which was higher than the second). We shall give no more space, however, to discussion of the circumflex and the anticircumflex, for at the time when Gregorian chant was developed, they had both been reduced to a simple accent and thus were similar to the acute accent.

We shall merely note the general rules which had determined the place of the accent when it was formed:

(1) In words of two syllable, it was on the first.

(2) In words of three syllable or more, it was on the penultimate if the penultimate was long, but on the antepenultimate if the penultimate was short.

It was the second of these two rules which the editors of the liturgical books applied too strictly, without taking into account any of the necessary exceptions. No doubt studies of romance philology were not sufficiently advanced in the sixteenth century to enable editors to use that science easily as a source of information about the Latin accent. The intrinsic study of the Gregorian melodies, however, and the tradition of the more conservative churches would have saved them from blunders, but from the middle of the sixteenth century the traditions of the middle ages were misunderstood in many otherwise literate circles.

We have not given references or authors for the preceding remarks, since they are well-established facts for specialists of Latin or romance philology. The reader desirous of studying the corresponding documentation will be able to refer to the existing works on this subject.

To complete the general rules set forth above, we should add the following indications.

A certain number of words (which the grammarians Diomede and Priscian give us) were enclitics, that is, from the point of view of accent, they belonged to the preceding word. It was, moreover, customary to write them as part of that preceding word. We shall see that this category of words has given rise to errors in our liturgical books.

Among the monosyllables, those were accented which expressed an idea of some importance, such as the nouns, and, in general, adjectives, pronouns, adverbs and verbal forms. On the contrary, those monosyllables which formed what certain scholars call grammatical "tools", that is, those which express relationships between the essential words which the mind could often guess or fill in, were unaccented. These were those words which are today ordinarily omitted in, for example, telegraphy. In Latin we can put into this category the prepositions and monosyllabic conjunctions.

Prepositions of two or three syllables were unaccented when, as is most often the case, they preceded the noun or pronoun to which they were related. When they followed it, they were accented. Thus the first syllable of *coram* was proclitic in the phrase *coram te*, but accented in *te coram*. It follows, then, that a two-syllable word of this kind can be accented or not according to whether or not it is used as a preposition or in another function. The word *supra*, therefore, was unaccented when used as a preposition, but accented when it was an adverb. This is the same in Italian for the counterpart *sopra*.

Agreeing evidence from Quintilian, Aulu-Gella and Priscian indicates that any category of words which can be some-

times interrogative (directly or indirectly), sometimes merely conjunctive, are accented only in the first instance. Such words are *qui*, *qualis*, *quantus*, *quot*, *quando*, *qua*, *quo*, *ut*, *ubi*, *unde*, etc. We should note that this applies, too, in the modern romance languages, notably Italian and Spanish. In the writing of the latter tongue, moreover, this very distinction is indicated by the placing of the accent mark on these words when they are interrogative. In the Gascony dialect of the region around Bayonne, the Latin *quando* has even led to two clearly different forms according to the lack or presence of the interrogative intent; in the interrogative the form is *Kwant*, and in the conjunctive form, *Kent*. The weakening of the A to E in this second form is due precisely to its proclitic pronunciation. We see in this case an example of the remarkable way in which the romance languages preserve a characteristic of ancient accentuation.

According to Priscian, *iam* and *dudum* are proclitic when they precede the word they affect, and accented in the contrary usage.

According to the same author, *sic* is accented, except in formulas of greeting, in which it becomes proclitic.

It would be desirable that, in courses on Gregorian chant, the students be given a list of proclitic words, and that for those among them which can occasionally be accented, the liturgical books provide them with the printed accent mark for the necessary cases.

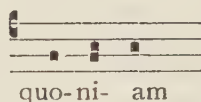
Among conjunctions of two syllables, those which are placed at the head of a clause to which they belong are proclitic. That explains to us, then, why, for example, the Latin *quia* was reduced to *ca* in ancient Spanish. Those, on the other hand, which are not placed at the beginning, but rather after two other words, appear to have been accented.

According to the expressed commentary of Priscian, the trisyllabic word *adversus* was unaccented when it was used as a preposition. It is thus an error that the liturgical books accent it in such a case, for example, in the second verse of the



Psalm *Quare fremuerunt*. It is true that in this particular case the loss is not great, for in the rapid and light singing of a psalm tone, the accents of words sung on the tenor are not very apparent, but it would be more correct to eliminate this kind of accent which has erroneously been published in the official books.

Although we cannot remember having seen any ancient evidence concerning it, it is probable that the trisyllable *quoniam* was unaccented. The singing of this word in the antiphon form *quoniam in te confidit* reveals only that the



accent was not on the syllable *ni*. This melodic formula is, in fact, used ordinarily to convey either a proparoxytonic trisyllable, such as the word *hodie* (Office of the Purification), or a two-syllable word followed by a monosyllable, such as *hora est* (Matins of the Sundays of Advent). In view of the doubt, at least temporary doubt, regarding the accentuation of this word, it would be prudent not to mark it with a printed accent.

We note in passing that we call *oxytonic* those words which are accented on the final syllable, *paroxytonic* those accented on the penultimate and *proparoxytonic* those accented on the antepenultimate.

Even before the classical era, the laws which had governed the formation of the Latin accent were no longer in force. We mean by this that they were no longer automatically applicable without conflict with new words which came into the language or with new forms which an existing word could take by means of the transformations which introduced phonetic tendencies which were previously unknown. Thus, for example, when the archaic form *produce* was reduced to *produc*, the tendency to always accent two-syllable words on

the first syllable was not applicable, since in *produc* and the words of this type the accent remained on the vowel which preceded the final C, and these words therefore became oxytonic. This indicates, in fact, that once the Latin accent was established, it gave every indication of maintaining an extraordinary fixity. Let us merely consider the words of popular form in the romance languages. These are the most striking, for they are the ones which have come from Latin by a purely oral tradition, uninterrupted in the course of centuries. The great majority of these words still maintain the accent on the syllable which was accented in the original Latin. Of course there are some displacements, caused most often by analogies with words of similar form, but regardless of the number of these displacements, they remain the exception by comparison with the enormous preponderance of the cases of stability. Stability, without possible doubt, was the rule. Almost to the last detail the observations which we have made about the monosyllables as also that regarding the enclitic nature of prepositions and conjunctions hold good for the romance languages, too. Italian and Spanish pronunciation are particularly faithful in this sense.

Although the place of the accent remained the same, the nature of the accent became somewhat modified in the course of time. At the beginning, from what little we know, it was merely an inflection of the voice, giving all or part of the vowel of accent (according to the case) on a raised pitch. This was an accent of height, in which the difference of pitch was not necessarily related, at least in any powerful way, with an intensive stress.

It is difficult, however, that a pitch-accent should not, in the course of time, become also an accent of intensity. Quite often a singer who seeks to attack a high note also sings louder, whether or not he does this intentionally. In the languages of western Europe and of America, the expression "to raise the voice" means, together with the implication of pitch, to speak *louder*, and the expression "to lower the voice" also implies the element of softness, quite as much as that of pitch. We can readily see how, then, the pitch accent became also an accent of intensity; without actually eliminating the pitch

element, the intensive quality had become the prime quality, and the pitch had become a secondary part of the plan. Certain conditions, which we would need too much space to describe here, would show that this situation had certainly come about even before the period in which Gregorian chant was formed.

On the other hand, the disappearance of the difference of length between the ancient long vowels and the ancient short ones had had as a result the transformation of the circumflex and anticircumflex accent into a simple form, similar to that of the short vowels. There was, then, a unification of the manner of marking the accent. In some liturgical books of the seventeenth century the vowels which, in the classical era, had been treated with a circumflex accent were marked with the sign the grammarians had used for this accent. The word *laudate*, for example, was given as *laudate*. This is a complication to be rejected, for in the period when Gregorian chant was definitely formed, the circumflex accent had been reduced to a simple acute accent.

### Summary of the Method Followed in this Study

We shall now examine the exceptions which we can find in regard to the general rules set forth above, regarding the position of the accent. The method which we shall follow in this study appears quite sure to us. The following is a summary of what it consists of.

1. The ancient authors, notably Quintilian, Aulu-Gella and Priscian, formulated statements regarding accentuation which, although fragmentary, are nonetheless of great value. We can put complete confidence in them, for it is obvious, according to the way they express themselves, that these authors are not mere logicians of grammar like so many of the writers since the seventeenth century, but honest historians of true fact. Moreover, although we find among their statements some which we cannot verify, there are others for which the Gregorian melodies of the ancient repertoire provide us with confirmations. For still others the romance languages provide the confirmations, and in the infinitely rare

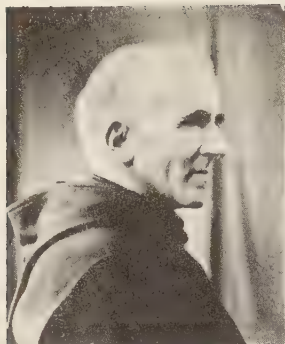
cases where the romance languages are not in accord with the testimony of an ancient author, it is always easy to guess the reason for the state of affairs presently existing in the romance language.

II. There are cases in which the romance languages reveal, for a word or group of words, an exception to the general laws of the accent, although we do not find such a case noted by the ancient authors. The question which is thus posed is this: is the exception proper to the popular form of Latin (from which the romance languages came), or is it common to the language of educated society? It is indeed clear that from the fourth to the sixth century the language of the Church followed a careful, refined pronunciation, more archaic on certain points than the language of everyday conversation. One remark will suffice to show this: whereas in the common tongue words such as *filia* or *pretium* had become two-syllable elisions, the authors of the Gregorian melodies treated them as trisyllables, that is, in conformity with classical pronunciation. To know whether an accentuation taken from the romance languages was drawn from the Latin of educated people, we can thus refer in complete confidence to the indications furnished by the old Gregorian repertoire. We shall say immediately that the cases in which this comparison shows a difference between the popular pronunciation and that of cultivated persons are extremely rare, and we can conclude that the dissimilarities were limited to a very few things.

III. Certain words appear in Gregorian melodies with an accentuation which is not in conformity with the general rules, and it happens that for these words the romance languages provide us with no direct information. Our method is limited in such cases to looking for plausible reasons of linguistic order which can justify the exception, which, in any case, must be accepted, since it is contained in an ancient practice.

(*to be continued*)





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